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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered through Station WRC and 34 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, April 15, 1930.

The weather has been warm here at Washington, D. C., for the past several days, in fact, I don't think in all my experience I have witnessed such a rapid development of growth. With this kind of weather, those of us who have gardens are over-crowded with work, and if we are not on the alert, certain insects and diseases will get started before we are aware of their presence. The main point is that every gardener be prepared to fight these insidious pests of his crops, and not put off the assembling of materials and equipment until time to do the fighting.

Those of you who have fruit trees should have on hand arsenicals and other poisons that are needed to control codling moth, plum curculio, and other insects that damage fruit crops in your section. Then there will be the question of getting copper sulphate and lime for making Bordeaux mixture with which to ward off the leaf diseases. A supply of nicotine sulphate will be required for protecting the plants from those troublesome little insects known as plant lice or aphids.

Perhaps, first of all, you will do well to send to the Department of Agriculture and get a copy of Farmers' Bulletin No. 1-3-7-1, "Diseases and Insects of Garden Vegetables," which very briefly describes the more important insects and diseases that infest garden crops, and gives the usual remedies in simplified form.

Then it comes to the insects and diseases that trouble fruits, you will need a copy of our bulletin containing information for fruit growers about insecticides, spraying apparatus, and important insect pests. It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 9-0-8.

Among the garden insects that give most trouble are potato beetles, flea beetles, aphids, and in many sections, the Mexican bean beetle. I believe I have told you before that the usual control for all of the insects that eat the foliage and stems of the plants is to poison them with some form of arsenical poison. The main point is to do the work in time before any harm is done.

It used to be my job when I was a boy on the farm to go through the potatoes and pick off the hard-shell potato bugs before they had a chance to lay eggs and start a brood of hungry soft-shelled beetles which would later destroy the potato crop. How I did hate that job, but today no potato grower would think of spending time hand-picking the beetles, but he sprays or dusts his potatoes at regular intervals with arsenate of lead, Paris green, calcium arsenate, or magnesium arsenate to kill the beetles.

The miserable insect known as the Mexican bean beetle has pretty thoroughly over-run the eastern United States during the past few years, and has given commercial bean growers and home gardeners no end of worry.

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Year before last the bean beetle had me pretty well whipped, and like many of my neighbor-gardeners, I felt like saying that I would plant no more beans, but let somebody else feed the bean beetles. Last year, however, I concluded to try again and by spraying regularly with magnesium arsenate, I not only controlled the beetles, but grew more beans than usual. While I haven't planted a bean in my garden as yet, I have a couple pounds of magnesium arsenate and a supply of pyrethrum extract safely stored overhead in my garage ready to start the fight on the bean beetle the minute the first of the early brood appears.

From my own experience, I have found that doing the work on time, and applying the remedy to every part of the plant, and especially on the undersides of the leaves, are the important points in the whole fight against insects. I provide the materials in advance of the time that they will be needed, also have the sprayer and the duster fully tested and hanging in a convenient place in my garage where I can use them, often in the morning before breakfast, and apply the proper remedy before the beetles get the start of me.

Take the asparagus beetle, for instance, which feeds on the tops of the asparagus during the summer, practically ruining next year's crop of asparagus. By dusting the plants early in the morning when the dew is upon them, using a mixture of about a heaping tablespoonful of arsenate of lead to a pint of hydrated lime, I can completely control the beetle. Sometimes I apply the dust by means of a cheesecloth bag, simply shaking the bag over and among the plants. On other occasions, I mix an ounce of the arsenical in 3 gallons of water and spray the plants with this mixture. In case I put the poison on when the asparagus plants are dry, I use the spray, because dust does not stick well to the plants when they are dry.

Many of you may think that I am rushing the season in giving this advice at this time, but I know how prone we all are to put off getting the materials with which to fight insects and diseases until they are actually needed, then there is delay in sending for them, and possibly the dealer may be temporarily out of them, and so there is another delay during which our crops suffer. Don't forget that practically all of your State colleges and experiment stations have issued bulletins on the control of insects and diseases that attack both fruits and vegetables. We will be glad to send you our bulletins, but your State people may have publications that deal more specifically with your local problems.

In closing, let me repeat my former precaution regarding the careful handling and storage of poisons used in the fight against insects, as there is always danger of children or domestic animals being poisoned as a result of careless handling.